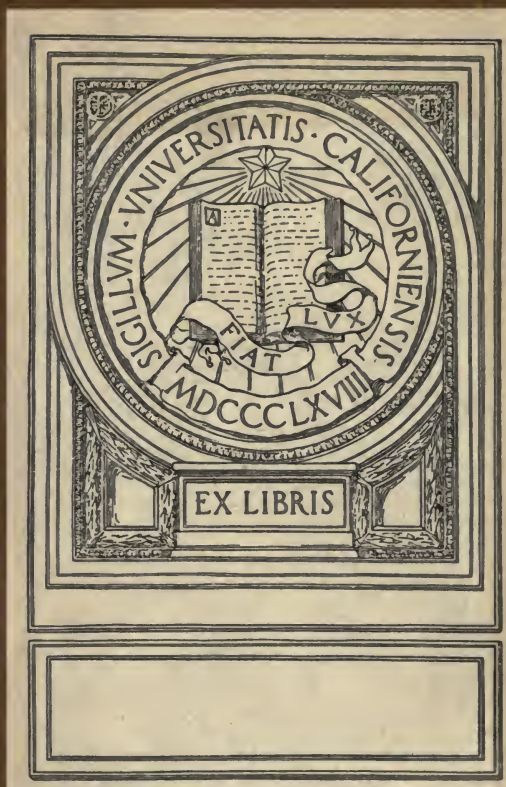
UC-NRLF
B 3 046 355

John Eustace Grubbe.


SIGILLVM · VNIVERSITATIS · CALIFORNIENSIS
FIAT LVX
MDCCCLXVIII
EX LIBRIS

ANTICHRIST DETECTED,

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN

ST. THOMAS'S CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM MARSH, D.D.

RECTOR.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.—ANY PROFIT TO BE APPROPRIATED TO A CHARITY.

LONDON:
HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND Co. AND B. WERTHEIM.
BIRMINGHAM:
T. RAGG AND Co. 16, SPICEAL STREET.

1841.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/antichristdetect00marsrich

TO THE CONGREGATION

OF

ST. THOMAS's CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM.

My dear Friends,

Suffering from temporary blindness, I have of late been obliged to preach without notes; but, at your request that it should be printed, I have dictated the substance of my Sermon on Antichrist. The above must be my apology for any inaccuracies. I make, however, no apology for my subject. Though redeeming love be the theme on which I delight to dwell, yet I feel it to be my bounden duty to guard my people against self-deception, and any prevailing error of the present day.

The signs of the times are not to be overlooked, and as the victory of the truth approaches, the enemy of the truth will assume every form to deceive the unwary. Happy are they who are preserved in the simplicity of the Gospel. My prayer for you is, that being justified by Faith, you may have peace with God, bear fruit unto holiness, and have for your end everlasting peace.

I am,

Your affectionate Friend,

WILLIAM MARSH.

Nov. 4, 1841.

ANTICHRIST.

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

1 John ii. 18, 19.

WHEN this fair world rose out of chaos, and man, formed in the image of his Maker, was invested with dominion "over all the earth," "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;"* even the Lord himself looked down from Heaven upon every thing that He had made, and "behold it was very good." Had man continued holy, he would have continued happy; but an enemy was at hand. Satan, the leader of that rebel host of angels who kept not their first estate, beguiled Eve through his subtlety, and thus human nature became subject to the arch deceiver.

* Job xxxviii. 7.

From that first offence in Paradise commenced the fearful conflict still carried on between the powers of light and darkness, that is, between Christ and Satan. I say between Christ and Satan, because, in the threatening against the tempter, and before our first parents were sent forth to experience the bitter fruits of their transgression, a deliverer was promised who should destroy the power of the enemy; "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."*

The Most High, having thus revealed the plan of mercy, by which he could uphold the honour of his moral government, and yet provide salvation for rebellious man, it became Satan's object, through *deceit* or *violence*, either to prevent the knowledge of that Saviour, or to corrupt and nullify the faith which would lead to salvation through Him.

It shall therefore be my endeavour to trace the Enemy's path in his various forms of Antichrist, from the beginning until the period of his final defeat. Let me, therefore point out to you—

I. The characteristics of the opponents of Christ.

II. The best means of detecting them.

III. The evidence they afford to the truth of Christianity.

I. *The characteristics of the opponents of Christ.*

"Yea, hath God said,"† was the first suggestion of the Deceiver, by which he would raise a doubt in the mind of Eve. He then proceeds to a positive assertion that "they should not surely die," and thereby instils unbelief. His next step is to present the idea of a greater good than they at present enjoyed, and thus was Eve, by degrees, deluded into the sin of disobedience.

Human nature having transgressed, and become liable

* Gen. iii. 15. † Gen. iii. 1.

to the penalty of death, God appointed a sacrifice, by which man is taught the desert of sin, and yet the way in which, through an innocent substitute, he could obtain mercy. Abel, in faith, brings the firstlings of his flock as an offering for sin, but Cain, "who was of that wicked one," rejects the typical atonement, and hating the faith and obedience of his brother, deprives him of his life. Thus early, the leading characteristics of *Antichrist*, *deceit* and *violence*, were displayed.

In the family of Seth, the worship of the true God was still continued, but in process of time it was so mingled with false worship, that at length, the light remaining only with Noah, the rest of the world was swept away by the flood. Again was the olive branch of peace held forth, and at the commencement of this new era of our world, Noah approached God with the appointed burnt-offerings; but, though the light continued to glimmer amongst his descendants, it seems to have been nearly extinguished, when it was again rekindled in the person of Abraham, and he, with his descendants, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, bore faithful witness to that light until it sank in Egyptian darkness.

After a time Moses appeared, and by him it pleased God to republish the law of love, and to establish a typical dispensation among the Jewish people. Then was the malice of Satan again stirred up to defeat this gracious purpose, and by the imitation of the miracles wrought by Moses, he contrived to keep the people of Egypt in their delusion, and no sooner had the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, and escaped from the rage of their enemies, than they were led to corrupt their faith in the one true God, by worshipping Him under the symbol of a golden calf. The zeal of Moses soon put an end to this delusion, but the spirit of it seems to have remained amongst them, for in after time Jeroboam drew ten of the tribes aside to idolatry, and by substituting the calves of Dan and Bethel for the true worship at Jerusalem, provoked the Lord to cast them out.

In Judah was God still known; but false prophets arose, "the priests bare rule by their means, and the people loved to have it so," till at length the two remaining tribes, Judah and Benjamin, were sent to be purified in the furnace of Babylon. But the Most High delivered them from their captivity, because He had foretold, by the patriarch Jacob, that "the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh should come."* And he had also sworn by an oath to David, that He would raise up a son to set on his throne in whom it should be established for ever.

I need not dwell on the *violence* of the *Enemy* in the persecutions of Daniel and his companions; neither on the still more universal oppression of the Jews under Antiochus; nor enlarge on the opposition made by Sanballat and Tobiah, in order to prevent the restoration of the pure worship at Jerusalem. The prophet Zechariah informs us, that Satan was then seen in vision, as "standing at the right hand of Joshua to resist him."*

At length the fulness of time arrived when the Son of God was to be manifested, to destroy the works of the Devil. No sooner was his birth announced than Herod, into whose hands the sceptre had now fallen, sought, both by stratagem and force, to take away his life. And when our blessed Lord was about to begin his ministry, the wily foe endeavoured to lure him from his work, but in vain. Our great Deliverer in single combat foiled the Adversary, drove him from the field, and by suffering on the cross for the sins of men, virtually conquered him for ever.

But it was in the council of God, that his church should still carry on the conflict, and both the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles to the churches bear ample testimony to the *violence* and *deceit* with which the enemy tried, both to oppose and corrupt the truth.—Previous to the Roman Empire professing the faith of Christ, *violence* was the weapon resorted to, in order to subdue the early Christians, but when that weapon could

* Gen. xlix. 10. † Zech. iii. 1.

no longer avail, by mingling error with truth, he beguiled his unwary victims. Ignorance and bigotry, with ambition and violence, ranged themselves on his side, and pure christian truth was obscured for ages, when God, (who "chooses the weak things of this world to confound the mighty,"*) called from his cell the monk of Wittenburgh, and placing in his hand the thunderbolts of Heaven, shook the system of corruption to its centre.

Such are some of the various forms of Antichrist, under which the characteristics of Satan may be traced from the beginning of time until now. St. John, indeed, alludes to those which especially prevailed in his day, such as denying the sinfulness of human nature, and the divinity, humanity, and Messiahship of our Lord; but, however various or numerous their forms may be, the Christian need never be ignorant of his devices. I will therefore proceed to point out—

II.—*The best means of detecting them.*

In the execution of the great work of redemption, Messiah was to fulfil the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. Whatsoever, therefore, opposes itself to Him in either of these three offices is an *Antichrist.* Though our Saviour may be said to have exercised the prophetic office only during his personal ministry on earth, yet it was his Spirit which spoke by all the Prophets, "testifying before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow."† Every attempt, therefore, to set aside the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and every idea that would convey a doubt of their sufficiency, is opposed to His prophetic office; and every addition to them as an article of faith, or any omission by which a partial view only is taken, so that one truth is made to oppose or neutralize another, is anti-christian. "The law of the Lord is perfect, the testimony of the Lord is sure, the statutes of the Lord are right."‡

Infallibility is to be found in the Scriptures alone; not

* 1 Cor. i. 27. † 1 Pet. i. 11. ‡ Ps. xix. 17.

in the Fathers, for they differed: not in Councils, for they have erred;* not in any man, nor in any body of men, for they are all fallible, except the Prophets and Apostles, who never differ, never err, never deceive; but are infallible, because they "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."†

As to the *Sacerdotal* office, whatever conveys the idea of human merit, or would add any thing to the obedience unto death of our Redeemer, as the meritorious cause of our justification, is anti-christian. Jesus is the only way to the everlasting mansions, the only door to the abodes of bliss; and as there is no other sacrifice for sin than that which was once offered on the cross, so there is no other Mediator between God and man, but the man, Christ Jesus. The Scriptures are as jealous of this truth as they are of the unity of the Divine Nature, therefore whoever proposes any other medium of approach to God, or whoever directly or indirectly undermines the true advocacy of our Lord, is an Antichrist. It is the incense of this High Priest alone which perfumes our prayers; it is his blood alone which cleanses from all sin. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."‡

As to the *Regal* office of our Redeemer, whosoever would set aside the precepts of the Gospel as the rule of a believer's life, is an Antichrist; for "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."§ It is by the discharge of personal, relative, and social duties that we let our light shine before men, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and His commandments are not grievous. This is true Christianity, and if our faith thus work by love, and manifest itself in obedience, we shall be prepared to meet Him whenever He appears, to put down every Antichrist, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

* Art. 21. † 2 Pet. i. 21. ‡ John xiv. 6. § Titus ii. 12, 13.

Now let me shew you—

III.—*The evidence which these opponents of Christ afford to the truth of Christianity.*

We have to admire that wisdom of God by which the wrath of man is made to praise Him. We might tremble for the truth, when we consider the number, the deceit, and the violence of its opponents, were we not assured that they do but confirm it; because—

First,—*Their rise and fall are foretold in Scripture.* The book of Psalms, and all the Old Testament Prophets, very frequently allude to *the* opposing power; but in the New Testament, "the Spirit speaketh expressly that in these latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from meats."* Of these characteristics we have had a long and mournful display in Christendom, and they have prepared the way for "the scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming?"† and "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ;"‡ and thus are we entering upon "those last days, in which perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."§ All this have we seen manifested during the French Revolution, and we see its continuance in the spirit of infidelity and atheism of the present day.

Beloved brethren, perilous times *are* come. What is Chartism, but opposition to all human government? What is Socialism, but opposition to all moral and reli-

* 1 Tim. iv. 1. 2, 3. † 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. ‡ Jude 4. § 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

gious control, or Infidelity under its most dangerous form, because, whilst it approaches its victims in the garb of philanthrophy, it leaves unrestrained all the sinful passions of man, and then charges on religion the evils which religion alone could mitigate or remove. And, alas! that I should have to add, that even among ourselves, men arise, "drawing away disciples after them." From whence come the unhappy divisions in the very bosom of our own Church, but from Him who knows that a house divided against itself cannot stand. Do we not discern, in these "signs of the times," the "mystery of iniquity" distinctly at work? Is not Satan transforming himself into an angel of light, to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect?

Beloved brethren, there is no mystery in open ungodliness and sin. There is no mystery in the drunkard over his cups,—the miser counting his gold,—the voluptuary seeking his pleasure,—or in the midnight robber, whose hands are stained with blood:—but it *is* a mystery when error assumes the garb of truth, and when learned and pious men are allured from the word of God to human traditions,—from the power of religion to its forms and ceremonies. It *is* a mystery when learned and pious men, within the pale of our Church, *uphold* doctrines contrary to her Articles and Liturgy, and oppose the very principles they have sworn to protect. It is a mystery when learned and pious men, who would shrink with horror from doing any thing contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, are yet allowing themselves to be drawn and are drawing others from the simplicity which is in Christ. Satan well knows, that on minds like these, the darts of temptation to sin would fall harmless. Indeed, it is worthy of notice, that those who have introduced error in doctrine have not unfrequently been men ascetic and self-denying in practice, while it is also to be lamented that some who have been correct in doctrine, have held the truth in unrighteousness: but the piety of the former should not of necessity recommend their principles, *because* "Angels abode not in the truth."

Adam fell from a state of innocence, and the Apostle Peter was rebuked to his face because he erred upon this very point, the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Thus we see, that through *deceit*, old errors are creeping in under a new name, which threaten to undermine the foundation of our apostolic Church. Let the ministers and members of that Church rise up and protest against these errors, while they affectionately exhort their erring brethren to retrace their steps, and abide by the principles of Reformers and Martyrs.

But we have still to notice that these Antichrists also afford strong evidence to the truth of Christianity, inasmuch as—

Secondly,—*They never have been able to substantiate any charge against it.* Apostates from a false religion have always secrets to disclose injurious to its cause, but no charge has ever been substantiated against the religion of Christ. Pilate is constrained to declare, "I find no fault in him."* And Judas, the treacherous disciple, exclaimed, "I have betrayed the innocent blood."† Nay, its foes are even made to advance the cause they would fain destroy. The blood of Abel and all the Martyrs was the seed of the Church. The Israelites multiplied in proportion as they were oppressed. The fires of persecution have cast light upon the truth; and the crucifixion of Christ was the salvation of the world.

Such has been the conflict carried on from Abel's time unto the present day, and it will continue, under the various forms of avowed enemies, false brethren, or mistaken friends, until *He* shall come, who is emphatically The Antichrist to head the confederated hosts. Surely we live in times when "coming events seem to cast their shadows before;" signs multiply upon us, both at home and abroad; and if the Antichrists of St. John's time gave proof that his were the last days of the Jewish dispensation, should not the many Antichrists of our own time afford evidence that we are in the last days of

* John xix. 6. †Matt. xxvii. 4.

the Gentile dispensation, and warn us of the quick approach of that Man of Sin, whom "the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming."*

Beloved Brethren,

We live in "a world which still lieth in wickedness," or in the power of the evil one, except where the standard of the cross is raised. We see clearly demonstrated that there are two kingdoms, the one of light, the other of darkness, and to one of these kingdoms each of us must belong. There can be no neutrality. Satan is still the tempter: although he may change his form, his nature is the same. He can suit his temptations to every individual, and alter the mode of his attack to meet the varying circumstances of the Church.

In our favoured country the Gospel sounds throughout the land, nor can the enemy any longer prevail, either by deceit or violence, to keep us from some knowledge of the truth; it has therefore become his interest rather to permit men to go certain lengths in religion, so far as it may be necessary to lull the conscience to rest, but not far enough to save the soul. He cares not by what means he secures his victims. We may imagine him to have a peculiar satisfaction in leading them along the smooth but downward path of self deception, until they fall into the snare that he has laid for them. We live, indeed, in a christian land, but the important point to be ascertained is, Are we Christians? Great are our external privileges—great should be our spiritual attainments. But a fearful coalition seems now to be formed between the Church and the world, between God and mammon, which His word declares can never be served together.

Alas! the spirit of Antichrist is in every heart by nature, and reigns there as the strong man armed, until

* 2 Thess. ii. 8.

a stronger than he cometh to dispute the sovereignty. That conflict, then, begins between nature and grace, which is so forcibly described in the 7th of the Romans, a conflict in which nothing but the aid of God's Holy Spirit can bring us off victorious.

Beloved brethren, in the last verse of my text may be found the application of the whole subject. Learn, First, *The insecurity of a nominal profession.* "They went out from us because they were not of us." Hence the absolute necessity of being rooted and grounded in the faith of God our Saviour Jesus Christ. Without this strong foundation, the mind of man is open to every breath of temptation, and liable to be carried about with every wind of doctrine.

Learn, Secondly, *The stability of a true conversion.* "If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." The true Christian may be drawn aside, or driven out of his course for a time, but, like the magnetic needle, true to the pole, he will tremble until he regain his point of rest, and that rest is in CHRIST. Let me congratulate you on being members of a Chnrch which affords such ample means to secure the stability of her members. She appeals to Scripture, and to Scripture alone, as the all-sufficient rule of faith. She has provided in her services for the daily reading of it, and its spirit is embodied in her admirable Liturgy. She brings us before God in our proper character as sinners. She fixes our hopes on the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour, and she leads us perpetually to pray for the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit to counteract all the devices of the evil one. Then search the Scriptures daily, and pray for the blessing of a true conversion, for we know not how soon our sincerity may be tested. Therefore be upon your guard: it will not do to rest in the mere reception of the sacraments,—on the strictest outward observance,—but we must look through all to Christ himself. He is our hope and our motive,—He is our example and our strength; therefore let us

address Him in the comprehensive words of our Litany, "That it may please thee to lead into the way of truth all such as have erred and are deceived; to strengthen such as do stand; to comfort and help the weak-hearted; to raise up them that fall; and, finally, to beat down Satan under our feet."

T. Ragg and Co. Printers, 16, Spiceal-street, Birmingham.

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.
This book is due on the last date stamped below, or
on the date to which renewed.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

MAR 20 1967
RECEIVED
MAR 5 '67 -1 PM
LOAN DEPT.
MAY 1 1969 48
RECEIVED
APR 17 '69 -3 PM
LOAN DEPT.
MAY 21 1969 09
REC'D LD JUN 6 '69 -3 PM
NOV 13 1970 04
REC'D LD OCT 30 '70 -12 AM
FEB 07 1997
REC. MOFFITT NOV 14 '9

LD 21A-60m-7,'66
(G4427s10)476B

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES
C057938897

871786
AC1
M5
v.7

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY